

"Film and Video, Takahiko Iimura",
Anthology Film Archives Notes, New York, 1990, p. 55

"Talking to Myself: Phenomenological Operation" was originally made as a videotape series consisting of 6 pieces (1978). One of these tapes I exhibit as an installation (1979). The idea of the tape is derived from a particular sentence of Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher: 'When I speak it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that I hear myself at the same time that I speak.' This sentence is taken from Derrida's book 'Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs' translated by David B. Allison.

I have put the above underlined sentence into the 'operation' in the tape, quoting, modifying and extending it. In other words, in this tape I have realized the idea creating its reality. The experimental part of this work is the relation between the audio and the video-image. Myself facing the camera, the very sentence is recorded in different manners so that the two identical sentences, both voiced myself, indicate different entities. For instance, in the piece no.1, within the structure of Derrida's sentence occurs a change from a voice, synchronized to the picture, to an off-screen dubbed-in voice. In this way there is a split between 'I' of 'I hear' and 'I' of 'I speak'. Although the sentence is complete, it does not assume an entity of speaking and hearing. Because the person in the picture does not hear (not audible) what the person off-screen says, only the viewer/listener can perceive both. (You have to watch the non-moving lips when you hear the off-screen voice in order to distinguish it from the synchronized voice).

This manipulation of sound is only possible in the recording, not in the actual speaking, therefore creating a video-reality. The statement is no longer self-evident in that particular reality. Moreover, in piece no.1, there is also a 'silent voice': the movement of lips while pronouncing the sentence, but the voice has been erased on the video-recording so that the viewer perceives the sentence repeating itself.

If the above examples are subtle for the viewer to distinguish, the piece no.2 might be more apparent. In this piece the sentence 'I hear myself at the same time that I speak' continues with 'to myself at the same time that', which are added by me to the original Derrida statement. In this way the whole sentence forms a circle, without interruption, shifting from 'I hear myself' to 'I speak to myself' and back to 'I hear myself'. 'At the same time that' are the linking words. The complete sentence is heard in video alternatively with 'sync' and 'out of sync' (dubbed-over sync voice with slight time-lag of lip movement): the voices are referring to two different occasions of the recording. The simultaneity of hearing and speaking can be better realized in this circular structure in which both operations interact. Because the statement by Derrida is half of the operation and the another half is 'I speak to myself at the same time that I hear'. Moreover, in 'I speak to myself (that I hear)' the self is pointed at without a second person hearing 'myself' speak. This completes the self-cycle: the 'hearing oneself speak' and the 'speaking oneself hear'.

The video-installation 'Talking to Myself' uses one of the tapes (of the series of 6), putting it into two separated tapes and playing them back on two monitors with four speakers. The images and the sounds are timed individually for time-shifting (of image and sound), both allowing occasional overlapping and mixing. In the installation, the viewer has more possibilities to identify the separated entities of the 'hearing oneself speaking' than in the playback of the single videotape. Because the multiple individualized monitors and speakers are placed at certain distances. The whole operation works in a space within a perceivable environment and yet the viewer must be able to find his/her position within it.

What I am trying to achieve in this piece is a communication (sender-receiver within the self) separated by its function but integrated by its perception."

-Takahiko Iimura

From the program for "Talking to Myself"

De Appel Gallery, Amsterdam, 1980